

EXTRACT FROM A BUDGET.

I have started what we grandly call a "Poetry Club." I conduct it with some formality, as they seem to like that. We have meetings once a week, on Saturday, during the time they rest after lunch. We collect all the poetry books we can, and then we each choose pieces to read. I call upon them in turn, and, of course, I read too. Sometimes it is rather funny, as S. will want to recite namby-pamby sentimental little verses she learnt before she came here, and B. finds pretty little verses on Christmas cards that she thinks quite beautiful. S. does not read her poetry well, but I always encourage her to try. They read them over quietly to themselves first, and are allowed to ask me the meaning of difficult words, etc. They love my reading to them, and I read a mixed lot of things : "The Lady of Shalott" (they love it); Edgar Allan Poe's "The Bells," which fascinates them by its swing, though I am sure they only understand half of it; Kipling's "Bandar Log," which I had to read over and over again as they liked it so much. I have also read most of Blake's "Songs of Innocence." B. generally likes to choose her pieces from Stevenson's "Garden of Verses"—I have not yet got them to learn little bits (out of time) to recite at the Poetry Club, but they love to recite any they know. I keep a little book in which I enter all we read, the author, and by whom read, and I mark those that are particularly liked and which they want to hear again some time.

THE PROTECTIVE SPIRIT.

"It has been found that the best way of arriving at a theory of disease is by beginning with the theory of health." Buckle, in his "History of Civilisation in England," applies this principle and shows that England's health is due to the

sturdy independence and scepticism which have kept her clear of much of the quackery to which other nations have become victims. Buckle's name for this quackery, as applied to nations, is the "Protective Spirit." He almost leads us to suppose that all legislation is quackery. "The scope of modern legislation is to restore things to that natural channel from which previous legislation has driven them" and "Every great reform which has been effected has consisted not in doing something new but in undoing something old." Two-thirds of this history are taken up with the study of the cause of the abnormal condition of other nations—the normal condition being Freedom. "They can never be free unless they are educated to freedom . . . this education consists in self-discipline, self-reliance, and self-government. These in England are matters of hereditary descent—traditional habits, which we imbibe in our youth." The condition of France is one of the many examples given of the disastrous effect of this Protective Spirit. "The whole business of the State is conducted on the supposition that no man knows his own interest or is fit to take care of himself." To-day's newspaper gives these statistics—The French State employs 664,000 officials, and the various local bodies employ 278,000, and all these out of a population of forty millions.

A modern novelist makes one of his characters say : "If you have good health take care of it, if you have indifferent health think of something better." How are we taking care of our inherited good health—our freedom? Is there not a Spirit of Grandmotherliness overshadowing us? Do not the extremes of our two political parties meet in this "managing" tendency? Ultra-Conservatism says : Dear people, we are your natural rulers and protectors, trust to us to make seemly arrangements for you." Ultra-Liberalism says : "Rule yourselves? Of course, quite right, and we will make some hard and fast rules for you to use."

Is not the mistaken idea that women need protection at the base of the strong feeling there is against Women's

Suffrage? Olive Schreiner, in "Woman and Labour," shows that this specialised treatment has had the effect of making women parasites. "The Position of Women, Actual and Ideal," contains a chapter on the position of Women in History that is informing on the subject of chivalry. "Chivalry in manners and social relations was far-reaching, and partly, though not entirely, beneficial." The idea of chivalry is indeed fine, but the fact is apt to be hollow.

In our own day what form does this Protective Spirit take? Let us take one of the many examples from the Insurance Act. We have probably all seen the picture of the magic box that hands out ninepence for fourpence. This is not a great magic. It may be merely a mechanical contrivance, but this box has further powers. People (men and women) who earn less than 15s. a week pay 3d.. When the magic box sees a sick man coming along it hands out 10s.; when it sees a sick woman only 7s. 6d. is forthcoming; it "protects" the remaining 2s. 6d. This is the kind of special treatment women receive from both sides of the House, and the explanation sounds quite reasonable: "There is no need to make laws for your benefit, you have 'natural protectors' in us." Sirs, we thank you for protecting us from . . . ?

In our relation to children I think we have at last removed the barriers to the high road of freedom, though many children are still kept in the bye-lanes of repression, while others have escaped on to the waste land of licence.

Men often say, "Boys have not half the 'go' they used to have; when we were boys we were always in a scrape of some sort." There are fewer criminals of this kind now because there are fewer crimes also; thanks, in a great measure, to the spread of P.N.E.U. principles, there is not even the excitement and glory of punishment.

It is this protective spirit that is the cause of so much "naughtiness" and "self-will." When children are three

or four years old they are reaching out for something stronger than they have had heretofore. "For their education children want chiefly opportunity." Give them this and they will help themselves to the mental food that is most suitable to them. How often it is said, "My little boy is so full of nerves that I have to keep him back." It is this "keeping back" that causes nerves: the child is not satisfied.

A man who was experimenting in the growth of coffee plants told me he found that the young plants grown under glass grew tall and weedy if shaded from the sun, but if the sun had free access the plants were not obliged to reach out to it and the growth was more normal.

I knew a child of 8 who was called "unmanageable," "unteachable," and "a mass of nerves." I own he had "the face of a child with the ways of a bear," but he was starving. He was being fed on nursery rhymes, the multiplication table, dear little books of moral instruction, and squared paper; his diet was changed to ballads, fairy stories, heroic tales, Green's "History of the English People" (no other real history being available), and the free use of a blackboard, and the result was—perfection? not quite, but the child became reasonable.

What infinite harm is done by "protecting" children and young people from knowledge of themselves, and oh, the folly of thinking it can be done! If a child's first questions about the beginning of life are answered simply and truthfully he will come naturally to the same source to have other questions answered later on. It is the mystery with which this subject is artificially surrounded that gives it an unwholesome interest.

Here is an example of the curious attitude some people have with regard to the human form. A mother, hearing that her daughter was attending a course of physiological lectures at her school, said: "Alas, that the first bloom of innocence should be rubbed off so early!"

It is real "masterly inactivity" that allows children not only to make mistakes but to take the consequences of them. There is no real freedom without responsibility. Is anyone fortunate enough not to know a child who has life peptonised for him, or it is diluted and flavoured until the real thing is successfully hidden? Children are born philosophers; they have the "single" eye, and see things in their right proportion if they are only permitted to take life as it comes. Freedom is not incompatible with discipline. "No greater mistake can be made than to suppose that a reasonably strict discipline interferes either with a child's sense of freedom or with his happiness. A very large part of a child's happiness consists in a sense of harmony with his surroundings. . . . Such harmony is obviously unattainable under a shifting discipline which permits one day what is forbidden the next. Hence one object of any discipline which has the child's happiness at heart should be to define as clearly as possible the limits between what is permitted and what is forbidden."

—W. B. Drummond.

What is Freedom, but the unfettered use
Of all the powers which God for use hath given?—Coleridge.

H. SMEETON.

MARY STUART IN SWINBURNE'S DRAMAS.

The three plays of Swinburne which deal with Mary Stuart were composed at widely separated intervals, "Chastelard" having appeared in 1865, "Bothwell" in 1874, and "Mary Stuart" in 1881, and this difference in dates, as I hope to show, corresponds with a marked and most interesting divergence in poetic form and general treatment.

"Chastelard" makes very delightful reading, being, as it is, of the very springtide of Swinburne's genius. It describes one of the minor episodes in the dark romance of Mary's life

—the love passage between her and the young and gallant French poet, Chastelard, who came over to Scotland from France in her train after the death of her boy husband, Francis II., returned for a brief period to his native land, and was drawn back once more by love of her to Scotland and his doom. Mary found in this sweet singer of the school of Du Bellay and Ronsard, with his chivalrous manners and quick, courtly wit, a blessed alleviation from the hard routine of the Scottish Court and the terribly solid learning supplied to her by George Buchanan. She showed him favour—more favour, perhaps, than she need have shown, certainly more than enough to beglamour his romantic young heart and head and make him mad with love of her. Twice did he penetrate into Mary's bedchamber, even as Porphyro in the "Eve of St. Agnes" penetrated into Madeline's. But he fared far worse than Keats' hero. The first time he was discovered and beaten by the grooms of the chamber; the second time Mary called her half-brother, the Earl of Murray, and the latter, with characteristic prudence, instead of killing him outright handed him over to a legal death.

It is characteristic of the merciless fashion in which Swinburne portrays Mary's character throughout the three plays, that he makes the solicitude which she at first feels for Chastelard disappear utterly, when she realises that if his life be spared her own reputation and position will be surely compromised. One of the main features of the play—indeed of the three plays—is the love of Mary Beaton for Chastelard and the hatred which she feels for Mary Stuart for giving him over to death—a hatred which runs through the trilogy like a train of smouldering fire, and at the end, in "Mary Stuart," flames fiercely forth and consumes the unlucky Queen. Mary Beaton, in fact, embodies here the old Greek conception of the Alastor, or Avenger, whose wrath may slumber for a while, but will, in the end, exact sure and terrible vengeance for things done long ago and ill done.

The plays abound in beautiful and striking passages. Here

is one in which Chastelard tells Mary Beaton of his love for the Queen:—

Chastelard. I know her ways of loving, all of them :

A sweet, soft way the first is; afterwards

It burns and bites like fire; the end of that

Charred dust and eyelids bitten through with smoke.

Mary Beaton. What has she done for you to gird at her?

Chastelard. Nothing. You do not greatly love her, you

Who do not—gird, you call it.

This passage sounds the keynote of Mary's character, as presented throughout by Swinburne—that of one whose love drew all men to her feet, yet whom to love was certain disaster and death. In "Mary Stuart" we find the same conception on Mary's own lips. She is speaking of Elizabeth's charges against her:—

" Nay, she saith but right,

Mine enemy, saying by these her servile tongues

I have brought upon her land mine own land's curse,

And a sword follows at my heel, and fire

Is kindled of mine eye-shot; and before

Whom did I love that died not of it? Whom

That I would save might I deliver, when

I had once but looked on him with love, or pledged

Friendship?"

In the pathetic words she utters here she shows the realisation of the utter hopelessness and tragedy of her own life.

It is impossible to say more of "Chastelard" here than that it contains many thoughts and images beautiful as this:—

" To make hell soft; yea, the keen pain of hell
Soft as the loosening of wound arms in sleep."

The note of the play which was to follow "Chastelard" is sounded in its last lines, spoken by the usher at the poet's execution:—

" Make way there for the Lord of Bothwell: room—
Place for my Lord of Bothwell next the Queen!"

When I read "Bothwell" for the first time the thing which most struck me—after the fine poetry scattered throughout it, and the tense dramatic grip of certain of its scenes—was the remarkable fidelity to historical fact. It deals in succession with Mary's love passage with Rizzio, his murder, her marriage with Darnley, the passionate love kindled between her and Bothwell, Darnley's murder, the rising of the Lords of the Congregation, her defeat at Carberry Hill and imprisonment in Lochleven Castle, her escape and final disaster at Langside; and through its whole long story Swinburne has presented incidents and character alike with a realism which, in the hands of an inferior craftsman, would have been fatal to poetry. Swinburne's fidelity to history, however, occasionally rewards him here, as in "Mary Stuart," with extraordinarily dramatic effects. In one scene Mary and Darnley, being closely beset in Holyrood by the Lords of the Congregation, have to creep through the channel vault of the palace to regain their liberty, and in doing this they actually pass the grave of Rizzio. The air is heavy with the presage of vengeance as Mary passes by the dead body of her lover in company with his murderer, the husband whom she hated. Intensely dramatic, too, is the scene at Kirk o' Field, where Darnley, lying sick and doomed, with his servant in the lonely house, tells him feverishly of his mortal fear of assassination at the hands of his wife and her paramour:—

" I say I hear their feet—
Thou hast no ears—God hath no ears for me,
Nor eyes to look upon me; hands he hath,
Their bloody hands to smite with, and her heart
Is his toward me to slay me. Let them come.
How do men die? But I so trapped alive—
O! I shall die a dog's death, and no man's.
Mary, by Christ whose mother's was your name,
Slay me not! God turn off from me that heart—
Out of her hands, God, God, deliver me!"

Here again Swinburne deals ruthlessly with Mary's character, and apparently believes firmly in the authenticity of the notorious Glasgow letter—the letter which, if it were really authentic, would prove her complicity in Darnley's murder beyond possibility of doubt. He believes this, in spite of the fact that the famous casket which contained this letter, together with the admittedly authentic ones, was for fifteen months in the hands of unscrupulous enemies, who had every motive for manufacturing evidence against her and inserting it into the casket. And not only does he make Mary privy to the murder, but he makes Darnley read upon her face her coming vengeance upon him, and realise that her sudden kindness to him had been simply assumed in order to bring him more swiftly to his death.

Bothwell's reckless and defiant individualism is well touched off in the following lines put into his mouth:—

“ Be you sure

I am not of such fool's mould cast in flesh
As royal-blooded husbands, being no king
Nor kin of kings, but one that keep unarmed
My head but with my hand, and have no wit
To twitch you strings or match you rhyme for rhyme,
And turn and twitter on a tripping tongue;
But so much wit to make my work and sword
Keep time and rhyme together, say and slay.”

I cannot help quoting one more passage from “ Bothwell ”—that in which Mary, just before Carberry Hill voices her exultant joy in danger. This passage may serve as an example of the splendid poetry which is to be found throughout the play:—

“ I would not lose for many fortunate years
And Empire ringed with smooth security
The sharp and dangerous draught of this delight
That out of chance and peril and keen fear
Springs as the wine out of the trampled grape,
To make this hour sweet to my lips and bid

My dancing heart be like a wave in the sun
When the sea sways between the sun and wind
As my sense now between the sun and hopes
That die to-day for ever.”

In this play, too, the inordinate love for Bothwell of the Queen is powerfully portrayed—the love which caused Kirkcaldy of Grange to write: “ She has said that she cares not to lose France, England, and her own country for him, and will go to the world's end in a white petticoat ere she leave him.” As Mrs. Maccunn says in her delightful book on Mary Stuart: “ There is a recklessness in this phrase which carries conviction, and in ‘ Bothwell ’ this conviction is expressed in the following words of Mary:—

“ I had rather be mishandled as I am
Of this first man that ever bound me fast
Than worshipped through the world with breaking hearts
That gave their blood for worship.”

The last line of “ Bothwell ” consists of the ambiguously ominous words spoken in answer to the Queen's plaint by the vengeful Mary Beaton:—

“ But I will never leave you till you die.”

In “ Mary Stuart ” there is, in the main, the same close regard to historical accuracy, and here Swinburne is in striking contrast with Schiller, who, in “ Maria Stuart,” made Elizabeth and Mary meet—which, of course, they never did. Swinburne's play seems to me to gain from its fidelity to history, and to sound the truer tragic note. One of the most striking features in the lifelong struggle between Mary and Elizabeth is the fact that, though they came so near to one another, they never actually met in the flesh. When the Queens are brought together, the groundlings rejoice; but while they are held apart, our feelings of pity and terror are aroused more deeply and subtly, for Fate itself seems the messenger between them.

Throughout this play Swinburne takes an unbiased—if it were not for the fervid lyricism with which he sings of her

we might almost say a severely judicial—view of Mary's character, and his hatred of sentimental or censorious partisanship for or against her appears again in his striking prose essay on the character of "Mary Stuart." In one passage her custodian, Sir Drew Drury, is made to speak of her in a passage of which these are the concluding lines:—

"She shall be a world's wonder for all time,
A deadly glory, watched of marvelling men,
Not without praise, not without noble tears,
And if without what she would never have,
Who had it never, pity—yet from none
Quite without reverence, and some kind of love
For that which was so royal."

The same note of admiration for her beauty, bravery, and overpowering charm—an admiration only deepened by his perfect comprehension of her crimes—is maintained by Swinburne throughout the play till the last fatal scene, when "weeping, captivity, and shuddering fear" were "stilled by the ensanguined block of Fotheringay."

V. O. E.

THE COUNTY OF CHESHIRE.

Cheshire seems to me a county which belongs in a few ways both to the North and to the South of England, and yet in other ways it is entirely Northern; it certainly is in climate. In Cheshire we have some flowers abundant in counties further south and which are never found further north. Here, too, is the northern limit for nightingales. The people of the agricultural parts of Cheshire are very different even from their near neighbours in Lancashire; only on the shores of Pickmere does one hear the clipped, burry tongue of the North.

I know but a few parts of Cheshire really well, but what I know has served to make me realise how easily the county

may be divided into hillside, plain, and coastlands. The hills of Cheshire are principally in the east upon the Derbyshire border, and where the "teapot handle" runs up between Lancashire and Derbyshire; there are high lands, too, near Congleton and in Delamere Forest.

The Plain of Cheshire includes all the rest except the Wirral Peninsula. On one who, like myself, has always lived among hills the plain of Cheshire has at first a most depressing influence, but the love of the land soon begins.

Mr. Arnold Forster might well have taken the county as an example for that chapter in "This World of Ours" which shows how the physical features influence the political geography of any district.

The most thickly populated part of Cheshire is the north-east corner, where coal is easily obtained and where the Millstone Grit hills provide cheap water power. The cotton industry of Lancashire spreads into this corner. A little further south along the border the hills are left in peace for the sake of the grouse moors and the water gathered thereon which helps to supply Manchester and several Cheshire towns. These hills closely resemble the hills of south-east Lancashire, but they are much richer in birds, beasts, and flowers.

The best agricultural lands of the plain consist of the stretch of land covered by the Keuper Marls (in places 3,000 feet thick), and the farmers owe their prosperous circumstances almost entirely to these marls. It is very easy land to plough; it is level, and the soil is not really heavy, whilst the rock is very well covered. In a circle of a seven-mile radius around my post at Mere I do not know of a solitary rock at the surface or in a cutting; the nearest approaches to rocks are some scattered glacial boulders of Welsh origin. The lower beds of the Keuper series are soft sandstones (grey, green, red, and variegated in colour), and above these is what the farmers know as "marl," it being a kind of clay which works into the loam very well. In almost every